



Lena Garza

ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE

FOWL PLAY

PJ GRAY



CHAPTER 1

SPRING BREAK

The last bag was packed into the car. Luna Garza stood in the driveway and stared at the house. It was completely draped with a blue tarp. Her family's two-story home looked like a giant tent.

She pulled out her phone and took a photo. "This is so weird. Mom and Ann won't believe it."

Her dad spoke to one of the pest control workers. Then he met Luna at the car. "Are you ready?"

Luna nodded, and they both got in.

“No more secrets, Dad,” Luna said as she buckled her seat belt. “Where are we staying?”

Mr. Garza pressed the ignition button. “Let’s grab lunch first. How about the Chow Down Diner?”

Luna smiled. “That sounds great. But where are we going to stay for the next four days?”

Her dad chuckled as he backed out of the driveway. “You’ll see.”

They arrived at the diner, sat in their favorite booth, and ordered food. For Luna, it was a meatball sandwich. That was no surprise. Meatballs were her favorite. But she raised an eyebrow when her dad ordered bacon, eggs, and French toast.

He shrugged at Luna. “When has breakfast ever been a bad idea?”

Luna rolled her eyes.

There was so much to discuss during lunch. Mr. Garza had found termites in their

house. He hired a local pest control company to kill the bugs. Spraying the entire house was the only solution.

Mr. Garza sipped his coffee and smiled. “It’s a good thing that your mom and Ann are in Paris. They get to miss this whole mess.”

Nodding, Luna bit into her sandwich. Their next-door neighbor was Ann Watson. She had won a contest. The prize was a trip for two to Paris. Ann had invited Luna’s mom to join her. Luna wished she could have gone too.

Her dad read her mind. “I’m sure you wanted to go, Luna. But your mom and Ann have become good friends since we moved to Apple Glen. Paris will be a fun adventure for the two of them.”

“I know,” Luna answered. “Ann and Mom are like Amber and me.” Then Luna began to think of Amber Robbins, her best friend at Apple Glen Middle School. Luna had met

Amber soon after moving with her parents from California to Apple Glen, Ohio.

Mr. and Mrs. Garza had wanted a new adventure. They had bought an old two-story house. However, the big house needed a lot of work. Apple Glen was a faded American town that had fallen on hard times. But some people, such as the Garzas, tried to make it better. While Luna's dad traveled for his job, Mrs. Garza restored their house. From that work, she had created her own business. Now she restored furniture and other objects for people.

"Luna?" Mr. Garza asked. "Did you hear me?"

"What?"

"I asked you what Amber was doing for spring break."

Luna looked down at the crumbs on her plate. "She's traveling with her family. They're in London."

“Oh,” he replied softly as he finished his lunch. Then he tried to lighten the mood. “Well, are you ready for the surprise?”

Mr. Garza paid for lunch, and they left the diner. Luna was so excited that she could barely sit still in the car. “Where are we going?”

“You’ll see,” Mr. Garza said.

He drove them through Apple Glen until they reached the older part of town.

“Are we staying at a hotel?”

“No,” he replied. “It’s somewhere better.”

“Really?” Luna’s excitement rose as they turned onto another street and then another.

Then Mr. Garza parked the car.

“Wait,” Luna said. “Where are we?” She had never been in this area.

“This is Seventh Avenue,” her dad said. He pointed across the street. “That’s where we’re staying while our house gets fumigated.”

Luna rolled down the car window and stared. Her smile disappeared. *What? That's a school. I'm staying at a school during my spring break?*



CHAPTER 2

WELCOME!

Are you joking?” Luna asked her dad.

“It’s no joke,” Mr. Garza said. “Now don’t get upset. Hear me out first. Do you know about the Old Schoolhouse?”

Luna shook her head.

He continued. “This is an interesting place. The owner turned it into a bird sanctuary. You like history, and this building is part of Apple Glen’s history.”

“But where do we sleep?”

“That’s the cool part,” he added. “The owner turned the old classrooms into apartments. I

rented one for us. It has two bedrooms. There's space for me to work in the living room."

Luna was speechless.

Mr. Garza put his hand on his daughter's shoulder. "Trust me. I think you'll like it. Besides, it's only for a few days."

Luna still couldn't speak.

"How about this? When your mom comes home, we'll all go to Wild Wonders Park."

Luna thought about the huge roller coaster and other fun rides at the amusement park. The park had really good meatball sandwiches too. "Okay. Let's do this."

Holding their suitcases, Mr. Garza and Luna stood at the building's entrance. Luna looked up. Above two large doors were words carved in stone. They read Apple Glen Schoolhouse. The big redbrick building was two stories tall.

Mr. Garza knocked on one of the doors.

Luna glanced to her left. There was a

button on the wall. It was a doorbell. “Dad.” She pointed at the wall and smiled. “Try that.”

He pressed the button, and a loud bell rang.

They stood silent for a minute. It felt like a very long minute to Luna. She rang the doorbell again. “Maybe no one is home, and we can stay at a hotel instead.”

Suddenly, one of the front doors opened. A man stood in the doorway and grinned as he raised his arms. “Welcome to Fowl Hall!”

Mr. Garza was so surprised that he dropped his bags. Luna jumped back.

“Please come in. You must be the Garzas. My name is Chadwick Moll. I’m the owner.” He reached out and shook their hands. Then he led them into the front hall. Mr. Moll was a tall, heavy man. He was dressed in a light blue jacket and green pants. He also wore a bright red bow tie and yellow-framed

eyeglasses. His thick and fluffy white hair reminded Luna of bird feathers.

“You can leave your bags here,” Mr. Moll said. “I’d like to give you a tour first. Then I’ll show you to your room. Follow me if you dare!” He released a hearty laugh. Luna saw the shock on her dad’s face. She tried not to giggle.

Mr. Moll gave them a tour of the building as he explained its history. “Many people believe that this is Apple Glen’s first school. But it isn’t.”

They walked down a long, wide hallway. Mr. Moll continued his tour as the Garzas followed. He explained that the first school was built in 1890. It was small. One teacher taught all grade levels in one room. Then more people moved to Apple Glen, thanks to the railroad that provided job opportunities. The schoolhouse became too small.

“This building became the new school,”

Mr. Moll said. “It was built in 1910. I think it’s beautiful, don’t you?”

Luna and her dad nodded in agreement.

“Then Apple Glen grew again,” Mr. Moll went on. “And this school became too small.”

“Wow,” Mr. Garza said. “So how long has this building been empty?”

“About 50 years,” Mr. Moll answered. “It was in bad shape when I bought it.”

He continued the tour. They entered a large room. Many boxes were stacked along one wall. “This was the original cafeteria. I’ll use it as an event space. People can rent it for private parties. Now I use it to store bird food and supplies.”

Luna’s dad noticed a large basket filled with strange-looking balls. Mr. Moll picked one up and offered it to Mr. Garza. It was the size of a softball. But it was covered with small seeds.

“I bet you’ve never seen one of these before.”

Mr. Moll chuckled. “They are birdseed balls. I have them custom made.”

Next, Mr. Moll led them down another hallway. Luna noticed the doors on either side. “Were these the classrooms?” she asked.

Mr. Moll nodded. “Some of them, yes. The school had two floors and 12 large classrooms. Each grade had its own room. The apartments will be the size of two classrooms.”

Luna did the math in her head. “So you will have six apartments to rent?”

Mr. Moll nodded again. “Three have been built so far. They are upstairs. It’s taken me several years to design them. I’m afraid time is not my friend.” He chuckled. “What is that famous saying? Time moves slowly but passes quickly. Who said that? Wasn’t it a famous writer?”

“Alice Walker,” Luna and her dad answered in unison. Then they smiled and gave each other a quick fist bump.

“Walk this way,” Mr. Moll said. “Let me show you the auditorium and the gym. They are my favorite spaces.”

Suddenly, Luna heard footsteps behind her. She turned and saw a pale older man creep across the end of the hallway. Luna felt a chill run down her back.

Luna Garza

ACCIDENTAL DETECTIVE

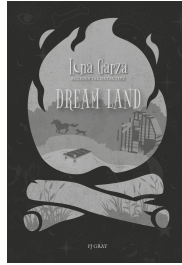
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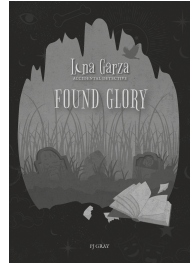
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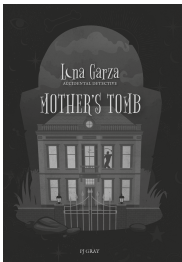
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FOWL PLAY

When insects invade the Garzas' house, Luna and her dad temporarily relocate to Fowl Hall. Along with being a hotel, the building is home to a rare breed of bird. Right away, odd incidents grab Luna's attention. Will she be able to figure out what's going on before a criminal escapes?

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